

IN THE CLAIMS

The following claim listing replaces all prior claim listings:

1. (Currently Amended) A digital signal processing method for reproducing digital signals comprising the steps of:

storing a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice out of a plurality of data blocks obtained at least by dividing a digital signal on a time base, said data block being temporarily stored in a separate medium separately from said remaining data blocks;

receiving information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained, wherein the period of time is related to each use of said data block; and

deleting said data block based on said information.

2. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said digital signal is taken into a recording medium by way of a network before it is reproduced.

3. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said digital signal is stored in a recording medium in advance.

4. (Cancelled).

5. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is read in.

6. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said information indicates the number of times of reading other data after reading in said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice.

7. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when the overall processing operation starts.

8. (Cancelled).

9. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is reproduced for the first time.

10. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said information is added to said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice as part thereof.

11. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is deleted when the processing operation for reproducing the digital signal is over.

12. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein if the retaining period of time indicated by said information is shorter than the time necessary for actually reproducing said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice, said data block is deleted when the operation of reproducing said data block is over.

13. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said data blocks to which said information is not added are deleted when the processing operation of reproducing them is over.

14. (Previously Presented) A digital processing method according to claim 1, wherein when said information is expressed by a predetermined bit string, said data block to be

used repeatedly at least twice is retained until time when the processing operation of reproducing all the data blocks is over.

15. (Currently Amended) A digital signal reproducing apparatus for reproducing digital signals, comprising:

a first decoding means for separating a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from the remaining data blocks of a plurality of data blocks obtained at least by dividing a digital signal on a time basis and decoding said data block, wherein said first decoding means extracts information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained, wherein the period of time is related to each use of said data block;

a retaining means for temporarily retaining said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said first decoding means in a separate medium ~~separately~~ from said remaining data blocks;

a second decoding means for decoding said remaining data blocks from said first decoding means and said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said retaining means; and

control means for deleting said data block from said retaining means based on said information.

16-17. (Cancelled).

18. (Previously Presented) A digital signal reproducing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said second decoding means decodes each of said data blocks, using identification information for identifying each of said data blocks.

19. (Previously Presented) A digital signal reproducing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said second decoding means decodes each of said data blocks, using said identification information and additionally reproduction timing information.

20-24. (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A program recording medium carrying a recorded program comprising:

a first decoding step of separating a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from the remaining data blocks of a plurality of data blocks obtained by dividing a digital signal on a time basis and decoding said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice;

a retaining step of temporarily storing said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said first decoding step in a separate medium ~~separately~~ from said remaining data blocks;

a second decoding step of decoding said remaining data blocks from said first decoding step and said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said retaining step; and

a deleting step of deleting said data block based on information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained.

26. (New) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said separate medium is semiconductor memory or a hard disk used to retain said data block.

27. (New) A digital signal reproducing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said separate medium is semiconductor memory or a hard disk used to retain said data block.

28. (New) A method for generating an audio signal, comprising the steps of:
receiving audio data including data blocks obtained by dividing a data signal on a time basis;

extracting from said data blocks one data block to be used repeatedly in a decoding process and remaining data blocks not including said one data block;

extracting from said audio data retaining information indicating a period of time during which said one data block is to be retained;

providing said remaining data blocks to a decoding process separately from said one data block;

storing said one data block;

controlling retention of said one data block based on said retaining information so that said one data block is retained only during said period of time;

providing said one data block to said decoding process during said period of time separately from said remaining data blocks;

processing said remaining data blocks with said decoding process based on said one data block; and

generating said audio signal.

29. (New) A method for generating an audio signal according to claim 28, wherein processing said remaining data blocks based on said one data block includes sequentially reproducing said remaining data blocks and said one data block.

30. (New) An apparatus for generating an audio reproduction signal, comprising:

a data decoding section;

a control section;

a storage medium;

and an audio decoding section,

wherein,

said data decoding section is operatively configured to receive an audio data signal including data blocks obtained by dividing a data signal on a time basis and which extracts from the audio data signal (a) one data block to be used repeatedly in a decoding process, (b) remaining data blocks not including said one data block, and (c) retaining information indicating how long said one data block is to be retained,

said data decoder and said audio decoding section are operatively configured and coupled to pass said remaining data blocks to said audio decoding section separately from said one data block,

said data decoding section and said control section is operatively configured and coupled to pass said retaining information to said control section,

said data decoding section and said storage medium are operatively configured and coupled to pass said one data block to said storage medium,

said control section and said storage medium are operatively configured and coupled so that said control section controls how long said one data block is stored in said storage medium base in said retaining information,

said storage medium and audio decoding section are operatively configured and coupled to allow said audio decoding section to read said one data block in said storage medium while said one data block is stored in said storage medium, and

said audio decoding section is operatively configured to process said remaining data blocks using said one data block to generate said audio reproduction signal.

31. (New) An apparatus for generating an audio reproduction signal according to claim 30, wherein said audio decoding section sequentially reproduces said remaining data blocks and said one data block.